

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Department of Health and Human Services

Participant's Manual
December 1996

“WARM UP EXERCISE”

Here is a warm up exercise to facilitate introductions and to get you thinking about workplace violence:

READ AND THEN BRIEFLY DISCUSS WITH A SMALL GROUP:

THANK GOODNESS ITS FRIDAY!

You are sitting at your desk quietly winding up your work for the day. It's Friday afternoon and your thoughts turn to your plans for the weekend. Suddenly you are startled by some commotion you hear in the hall. You recognize the voices of your co-workers John and Sarah. Sarah is yelling at John to stop bothering her, that she is sick and tired of his sexual harassment. John is yelling back at her, telling her she's crazy and that he can't stand to be with her, much less sexually harass her. The screaming continues and you step out into the hall to try to intervene. About that time, John storms off saying to Sarah, "I hope you have a horrible weekend, I'll make sure that you do!"

Sarah is shaking and runs out the door. You start thinking about what you should do. All you really want to do is go home and forget this event. It will cool down by Monday. Something bothers you, though. You know that John is an avid gun collector and user and that he is rumored to hit his wife. Suddenly you are worried about Sarah.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Do you think you should get involved in this situation?
2. What are you going to do now?
3. Is John a violent person?

INTRODUCTION

Why do we need training?

Violence is now a topic of concern to everyone in the workplace. It is important to understand workplace violence so it can be recognized, responded to appropriately, and prevented whenever possible. This training is not meant to be the only mechanism to reduce the risk of violence at your workplace. It is meant to be one component of a comprehensive effort at your workplace to address workplace violence.

The primary purpose of this training is to:

- ✓ Provide training for employees of the Department of Health and Human Services on managing violent or potentially violent situations.

The goals of the training are:

- ✓ To develop and support a work environment which will prevent and effectively respond to violent situations in the workplace.
- ✓ To increase employee understanding of workplace violence in these basic areas:

- Defining Workplace Violence
- Identification and Recognition of Actual and Potential Violent Situations
- Response and Intervention
- Follow-Up to a Violent Situation

INTRODUCTION

TO ACCOMPLISH THESE GOALS, WE WILL LOOK AT EIGHT TOPIC
AREAS:

Facts About Workplace Violence (Part 1)

What is Violence (Part 2)

Types of Violence at Work (Part 3)

Barriers to Addressing the Problem (Part 4)

Recognizing the Problem (Part 5)

What To Do When You Recognize a Problem (Part 6)

Making It Real and Applying What You Know (Part 7)

Other Things To Consider (Part 8)

PART 1: FACTS ABOUT VIOLENCE

Workplace violence affects **over two million** workers each year. The industries with the highest rates of workplace violence include retail sales, service, finance and real estate.

It seems as though there is an article every day in the newspaper or a professional journal reporting another incident of workplace violence. Be aware, however, that most incidents occur without receiving attention from the media. It is important for you to understand the facts about workplace violence. Here are some statistics to help you put this problem in perspective:

- 48% SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN A VIOLENT INCIDENT AT THEIR COMPANIES SINCE JANUARY, 1994.
- 45% OF EMPLOYEES ARE WORRIED THAT VIOLENCE WOULD ERUPT AT THEIR WORKPLACES.
- 39% SAID THAT THEY HAD BEEN VERBALLY THREATENED
- 57% WERE INCIDENTS INVOLVING EMPLOYEES AT THE SAME LEVEL
- 17% WERE INCIDENTS WHERE EMPLOYEES TARGETED THEIR SUPERVISORS
- 60% SAID THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE AGGRESSOR AS ONE WITH A POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE (SHRM, 1993)

Source: Society for Human Resource Management, Issues Management Program, 1996 Survey

PART 1: FACTS ABOUT VIOLENCE

Increasingly, the problem of violence has become a major cost to industry, particularly if the workplace does not have a clear prevention plan. The costs to organizations are staggering.

COSTS TO THE WORKPLACE

\$4.3 BILLION ANNUALLY

AVERAGE INCIDENT COST IS \$250,000

Source: "Workplace Violence: First Line of Defense",
The Employment and Labor Law Series, 1994

\$55 MILLION IN LOST WAGES EACH YEAR

1.8 MILLION DAYS OF WORK LOST EACH YEAR

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics (NCJ-178199), July 1994

Workplace violence affects other areas as well. The National Safe Workplace Institute has found that adverse impacts on organizations and individuals are wide-ranging and include:

- psychological damage
- property damage, theft and sabotage
- productivity impediments
- diversion of management resources
- increased security costs
- increased workers' compensation costs
- increased personnel costs

PART 2: WHAT IS VIOLENCE

There are many definitions of workplace violence. Some define it as physical types of attacks, or those involving weapons. Some define it as incidents between co-workers or as incidents that come into work from the outside community.

Workplace violence can occur in a number of different ways and incorporates a wide variety of behaviors. This is the way we have defined it at the Department of Health and Human Services:

"An action (verbal, written, or physical aggression) which is intended to control or cause, or is capable of causing, death or serious bodily injury to oneself or others, or damage to property. Violence includes abuse of authority, intimidating or harassing behavior and threats."

PART 3: TYPES OF VIOLENCE AT WORK

TYPES OF VIOLENCE AT WORK

There are many different types of violent behaviors that can be exhibited at work. Some "**obvious**" types of violence include:

BOMBINGS

SHOOTINGS

HITTING

FIGHTING

SCREAMING

THREATS

However, workplace violence incorporates much more. You may have experienced or witnessed verbal harassment or stalking at work. These are also types of workplace violence. Some "**not-so-obvious**" types of violence include:

HARASSING

STALKING

EQUIPMENT SABOTAGE

BUILDING SABOTAGE

**OTHER IRRATIONAL RESPONSES
(THROWING, DEFECATING, ETC...)**

*Have you ever witnessed any of these types of behaviors at work?
How did that make you feel?*

PART 3: TYPES OF VIOLENCE AT WORK

ACCORDING TO ONE AUTHOR, THERE ARE FOUR CATEGORIES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE:

- 1. EMPLOYER-DIRECTED VIOLENCE.** An employee engages in violence against an employer, manager, or supervisor.
- 2. DOMESTIC-RELATED VIOLENCE.** A romantically disaffected partner or would-be partner strikes out against the object of his or her affections.
- 3. PROPERTY-DIRECTED VIOLENCE.** These are employee acts against employers designed to damage company property.
- 4. COMMERCIAL-DIRECTED VIOLENCE.** An employee perpetrates events, including theft of money or property, that also involve violence.

Source: Joseph A. Kinney, Executive Director of the National Safe Workplace Institute in "Violence in the Workplace", American Society for Training and Development, July 1993

PART 4: BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

Now that you have a better understanding of the scope, severity and the frequency of

PART 4: BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

In addition to not reporting incidents and threats, there are a number of other common mistakes that organizations make with regards to their handling of workplace violence.

COMMON MISTAKES MADE BY ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ Fail to adopt/publicize a policy
- ✓ Fail to train supervisors and managers in implementation of policy
- ✓ Use standard psychiatric or psychological services to assess threat of violence instead of an interdisciplinary Crisis

PART 5: RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM

The first step in being able to respond to workplace violence is recognizing what the problem looks like at work. What are the signs of a potential or actual violent situation? Workplace violence typically follows a behavior pattern.

LEVEL ONE (EARLY WARNING SIGNS)

The person:

- refuses to cooperate with immediate supervisor or with subordinates if a supervisor**
- spreads rumors and gossip to harm others**
- consistently argues with co-workers**
- belligerent toward customers/clients**
- constantly swears at others**
- makes unwanted sexual comments**

LEVEL TWO (ESCALATION OF THE SITUATION)

The person:

- argues increasingly with customers, vendors, co-workers and management**
- refuses to obey agency policies and procedures**
- sabotages equipment and steals property for revenge**
- verbalizes wishes to hurt co-workers and/or management**
- sends sexual or violent notes to co-workers and/or management**
- sees self as victimized by management (me against them)**

LEVEL THREE (FURTHER ESCALATION, USUALLY RESULTING IN AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE)

The person frequently displays intense anger resulting in:

- recurrent suicidal threats**
- recurrent physical fights**
- destruction of property**
- utilization of weapons to harm others**
- commission of murder, rape, and/or arson**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (OFTEN TIMES THE INCIDENTS OCCUR OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE, HOWEVER, THE WARNING SIGNS MAY BE RECOGNIZED AT WORK)

The victim may show signs of:

- increased fear, emotional episodes, signs of physical injury and/or other physical stress (i.e. excessive phone calls)**
- deterioration of work performance**

Source: S. Anthony Baron, Violence in the Workplace, 1993.

PART 6: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE A PROBLEM

Workplace violence, and threatening and similar disruptive actions are prohibited because they adversely affect safety, morale and productivity. Ignoring an individual who exhibits these behaviors sends the message that such behaviors are acceptable. It is, therefore, critical to identify and report the behaviors described in this training at the earliest possible moment so that appropriate action can be taken. **For the training class exercise, review “Thank Goodness Its Friday” on page 1.**

WHEN EARLY WARNING SIGNS OCCUR (LEVEL 1):

- **OBSERVE** and **DOCUMENT** in detail the behavior immediately.
- **REPORT** concerns to supervisor and other appropriate officials.
- **CONTACT** HHS’ local Crisis Management Team to alert members to any concerns and seek their help in assessing the situation. This means you should be familiar with the team members.
- Supervisors should **MEET** with the employee exhibiting the questionable behaviors using the procedures noted below.

Schedule private time and place.

Get straight to the point.

Ask the employee for his or her input.

Ask the employee what should be done about the behavior.

Ask how you, the supervisor, can help.

Identify the performance and/or conduct problems that are of concern.

Set limits on what is acceptable behavior and performance.

Establish time frames to make changes and subsequent consequences for not meeting the deadlines.

Reward/recognize the desired performance or conduct.

Frequently at this level it is only necessary to remind the individual of the Department’s policies.

hat the person sees he or she has choices about how to behave.

- Supervisor should again **MEET** with the employee exhibiting the behaviors.

PART 6: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE A PROBLEM

Think about how the situation with John and Sarah. It could escalate. What are some possible case scenarios? How will you respond?

IN AN EMERGENCY (LEVEL 3):

Any individual observing violent or threatening behavior which poses an immediate danger to persons or property is expected to:

- **REMAIN CALM.**
- First **SECURE** your own safety.
- **CALL** 911 and other appropriate emergency contacts (such as building security and the Federal Protective Service) for that particular facility, particularly if the situation requires immediate aid of medical and/or law enforcement personnel.
- **COOPERATE** with law enforcement personnel when they have responded to the situation. Once law enforcement personnel are on the scene, they will assume control of the situation. Witnesses be prepared to provide a description of the violent or threatening individual, details of what was observed, and the exact location of the incident.
- **CONTACT** members of the Crisis Management Team so they can convene as quickly as possible
- If you are personally confronted by an angry or threatening person, **FOLLOW** the procedures described in Level 2.

PART 6: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE A PROBLEM

The U.S. Department of Justice has prepared the following information on handling bomb threats. Below is a set of questions to help notice important information and asking the right questions if a bomb threat is received over the phone. Try to write down exactly what the caller says and then call law enforcement personnel immediately.

-----Reproduce the Section Below and Keep In An Accessible Place At Your Workstation-----

HANDLING BOMB THREATS

Obtain the following information about the threat.

- telephone number where the call was received
- exact time of call
- exact words of the caller
- answers to these questions:

When will the bomb explode?

Where is the bomb?

What does it look like?

What kind of bomb is it?

What is your name?

What is your address?

Where are you calling from?

Why did you place the bomb?

- Make special note of the following information.

caller's voice (calm, excited, disguised, accent, etc.)

caller's sex

caller's age (as determined by voice)

voice familiar to you?

background noise

names of those threatened

PART 6: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE A PROBLEM

In the event that the perpetrator of domestic violence shows up at work (or is a co-worker of the partner) with the intent of harming the partner and/or any others who happen to be in the way or involved, follow the procedures described previously to respond to the immediate crisis.

If you know someone who is being affected by domestic violence, whether or not the perpetrator has shown up at work, it is important to provide support and assistance. Not only is the person at risk for more and usually escalated violence, but the situation has a negative impact on the productivity of the entire workplace. Below are some ideas for helping the co-worker affected by domestic violence.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Talk to the person about your concerns. Let her know that you are afraid for her safety and the safety of her children. Remind her that it will only get worse. Let her know that you will assist her in locating resources and developing a safety plan.
- Contact the Employee Assistance Program if you need more information.
- Recommend that she call the National Domestic Violence Hotline for more information about domestic violence or to help her find local resources. The number is 800-799-SAFE (7233) or TDD 800-787-3224. Also recommend that she contact the HHS Employee Assistance Program where she can also get help in understanding and responding to the problem.
- Recommend that workplace safety plan be developed in case an incident occurs at the workplace. Think about the safety of the individual as well as everyone around her. Do not be a hero if the perpetrator shows up at work. Follow the safety plan and go for help.

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

EXERCISES AND CASE STUDIES

This section contains one exercise and a number of case studies that will encourage you to utilize the information learned in the training and to think about the best ways to handle the issue of violence in the workplace.

Instructions for this section:

Your trainer will ask you to work in **small groups**. For these exercises, you should follow the steps below.

1. Read the assigned case studies.
2. Discuss “*Things to Think About*” and formulate responses.
3. Have someone in your group take notes and present your responses to the larger group.
4. Ask your trainer for assistance when needed.

Turn to page 27 when you have completed this section.

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

CASE 1: HELPING MARY

Mary is a co-worker in your agency. She has been a valuable employee to your group and one of the most respected experts in her field. You notice lately, though, that she is more reserved and is absent quite a bit. You hear her quietly crying or having a fight with someone on the phone frequently. She is a bit jumpy while she is at work, always looking over her shoulder when she goes somewhere.

You ask her to lunch one day and voice your concern. Mary says she is having some problems at home but that it is nothing to worry about; she can handle it herself. Several weeks later you notice that Mary's fear has escalated. She rarely leaves the building. When she must leave, she moves quickly, always covering her face. She works erratic hours. Her fear is really beginning to affect everyone at work. You are all concerned for her but don't know what is going on. You begin to wonder if there is a real danger, both to Mary and to the rest of you who work with her.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Do you believe this is a situation that requires further action on your part? Why or why not?
2. What are the appropriate interventions in this situation? Think about those things that you and the other co-workers can do, what Mary's supervisor can do, what security staff can do, and what any other agency staff can do.
3. Are there other protections that should be considered for Mary and her co-workers?

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

CASE 2: THE UNHAPPY CUSTOMER

Your job in this Department is to assist recipients of substance abuse grants. It involves working with customers face-to-face each day. Since there are many recipients of these grants, it is impossible to know all of them personally. Due to recent budget cuts, some of the grantees have been eliminated.

Some of the discontinued recipients have been calling you. They are extremely upset and have even screamed at you. One even threatened to get even since you ruined his life. You ignore these calls and threats, attributing the behavior to the situation of losing their livelihoods. In fact, you actually feel sorry for them and decide you would also be upset if you lost your program.

One morning, you are sitting in your office and a man bursts in and starts waving a gun at you. You do not recognize him. He starts screaming, “It’s time to get even and don’t act like you don’t know what I’m talking about!”

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Detail what you would do in this situation.
2. Could this situation have been prevented? If so, what are some of the preventative actions you and your Department could have taken?

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

CASE 3: THE BURNT OUT ADMINISTRATOR

In the last few months, your agency has undergone a reorganization. You are the computer network administrator and have been working very hard to reconfigure everyone's computers. You have been putting in a lot of hours at night so you cause as little disruption as possible. You are starting to feel extremely stressed. Your attitude has been bad and you don't particularly like coming to work. You tell yourself that this will end soon, after the new system is put in place.

One morning, after a particularly long night, you come in to work and sit down to read your e-mail messages. There is a message from a very angry employee whose computer has crashed and she needs your help immediately. You walk around to her space and the woman starts to verbally attack you.

She screams, "YOU ARE SO STUPID! ONLY STUPID PEOPLE WOULD MESS UP A COMPUTER THE WAY YOU DID. WHY DON'T YOU GET A JOB THAT YOU CAN HANDLE? DON'T YOU FEEL ASHAMED FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE TO ME?"

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. What are your thoughts about this woman right now?
2. Based on these thoughts, how do you think you will respond to her?
3. What are some effective thoughts that would let you see this situation in a different light?
4. What are some things you can do to handle the stress you are feeling at work lately?

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

CASE 4: THE STRANGE VISITOR

In the middle of the day, you leave your office to go the restroom. You notice that the back emergency door has been propped open to let in the cool breeze. Once you are in the restroom you notice a woman acting very strange. She is talking to herself and seems to be agitated. You have never seen her before and she does not have an ID badge on. When you leave the restroom, she follows you to your office. She states she is a job applicant but no one will talk to her and she doesn't know where to go. Her voice starts to get more frantic.

You offer to take her to the personnel office but she refuses to cooperate and becomes belligerent. She begins to scream about how the government is out to get her. It becomes clear that this woman is going to be a problem. You wonder how she ever got past the guard.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Now that this situation has escalated, what are the best ways to intervene?
2. Would you be concerned about the physical security precautions in your building? Why or why not? If you are concerned, what would you do to address these concerns?

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

CASE 5: THE SUSPICIOUS CALLER

You are a health care worker at the agency's clinic in Wotakki. As you are filling out your patient charts one evening, you hear the phone ring at the nurse's station and pick it up. The caller's voice is muffled, as if he had a handkerchief over the receiver. You also think you hear traffic in the background so it makes it even harder to hear. He starts talking very quickly and says, "I DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU ARE DOING AT THAT CLINIC AND I WANT IT TO STOP. I HAVE A BOMB PLANTED IN THE BUILDING AND PLAN TO SET IT OFF VERY SOON. YOU WILL BE SORRY NOW FOR WHAT YOU DID!" He hangs up the phone.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. What would you do now?
2. Based on this conversation, what information would you provide to law enforcement personnel?

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

CASE 6: ANOTHER VISIT WITH JOHN

Monday morning

This morning you receive an anonymous note from a female employee in your Department who has accused John of sexual harassment. The note states that he has placed several calls to this employee's home and asked her out on dates. The employee has refused and has asked John to stop calling her. The employee complaint was anonymous, but because you only have 25 female employees in your area, you have been able to narrow it down to five possibilities, based upon facts you received in the complaint. The complaint also alleges that while the female employee was standing at the copy machine, John rubbed up against her and made a comment about being physically attracted to her.

John is a 56 year old employee who has worked for the Government for 28 years. While John has not been a stellar employee, his performance has been adequate and he has received regular pay increases consistent with his longevity.

During the last five years, John has applied for 2 promotions and has been turned down both times. On those 2 occasions, he was disappointed that he was not chosen and made negative comments to his co-workers about affirmative action. However, it did not seem to have a significant impact on his work.

About six months ago, John and his wife of thirty years separated. They have three grown children, none of whom live in this area. While John didn't really talk about his separation and the details, there were some quiet rumors that John was abusing his wife. In addition, there have been many rumors over the years that John has an alcohol problem. However, since he has a very good attendance record and his performance is adequate, his supervisors decided to respect his privacy and not look into the rumors.

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

John has only a few friends at work. In his spare time, he is an avid hunter and competitive pistol shooter. In fact, he has won several national awards in competitions sponsored by the NRA. To your knowledge, he has never brought a firearm into the workplace.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. What are you going to do now?
2. Do you want to change any plans you made at the beginning of this training?

Next day 8:00 am

You read the complaint carefully again several times after not having slept well all night. You decide to contact the human resources office and speak to a special investigator who regularly conducts sexual harassment investigations. Since you do not know the identity of the complainant, it is impossible for you to conduct any interviews of that person. The human resources investigator calls John to come join you for a discussion.

9:00 am

John arrives and you and the investigator inform him that someone has complained about his behavior. You ask him if he will cooperate with the investigation. John expresses outrage that his reputation is being tarnished and demands to know the identity of the accuser. You tell him the complaint was anonymous, but he does not believe you. He insists that he is a good loyal employee with many years of services who is being unfairly maligned by some "bitch." This language and this type of behavior are fairly unusual for John.

Case 6 continued on next page.

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

Toward the end of the meeting with John, he becomes belligerent and says, "You have some nerve; I have worked here for 28 years and done a damn good job. Now, you have accused me of sexual harassment. This is outrageous." Then his face becomes beet red and he says, "I'll show all of you; nobody messes with me. I'm going to teach all of you a lesson you'll never forget!" With that, John bolts out of the meeting, walks out and grabs his coat, looks back and says, "I'll be back later, after I've taken care of a few things."

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. What would you do now?
2. Would you involve others at this point? What are the consequences if you do?
3. Do you think John has made a threat?
4. Do you think a request for a medical exam is appropriate at this time?

PART 7: MAKING IT REAL AND APPLYING WHAT YOU KNOW

CASE 7: THE BICKERING CO-WORKERS

You are the supervisor of a large group of employees. Over that last few months, you notice that two of you employees, Bob and Ed have not been getting along. They have been calling each other names and have been raising their voices at each other. You have ignored this up until now thinking, “Boys will be boys.” But the situation has escalated now and you are afraid one of them will harm the other. Co-workers are starting to complain that they are afraid and that they can’t concentrate with the disruptions. When you try to sit them down and talk to them, they are belligerent and tell you to stay out of the situation. They tell you this has nothing to do with work and they will handle it on their own. They get up and leave your office.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Do you think this is a violent situation? Why or why not?
2. What would you do at this point?
3. Do you think disciplinary action is warranted? If so, identify the behavior or conduct that is inappropriate. What is your recommended action?
4. Would you consider terminating these employees if the behavior did not stop? If so, what precautions would you take to assure the safety of everyone involved?

PART 8: OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

AFTER THE FACT

HOW TRAUMAS AFFECT EMPLOYEES

1. **Stage One**: This is the “shock” stage where the employee experiences emotional reactions characterized by shock, disbelief, denial or numbness. Physically, the employee experiences shock or fight or flight survival reactions in which the heart rate increases, perceptual senses become heightened or distorted, and adrenaline levels increase to meet a real or perceived threat.
2. **Stage Two**: This is the “impact” stage where the employee may feel a variety of intense emotions including anger, rage, terror, grief, sorrow, confusion, helplessness, guilt, depression or withdrawal. This stage may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months.
3. **Stage Three**: This is the “reconciliation stage” in which the employee tries to make sense out of the event, understand its impact, and, through trial and error, reach closure on the event so it does not interfere with the ability to function and grow.

Source: “Helping the Employee Recover from the Trauma of Workplace Violence”, Kenneth Wolf et al, EAP Digest, March/April 1994.

No matter how effective HHS’ policies and plans are in detecting and preventing incidents, there are no guarantees against workplace violence. When violent incidents occur, it is essential that the response be timely, appropriate to the situation and include proper recognition that the employees have been traumatized and their aftermath as just begun.

PART 8: OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

THE CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING PROCESS

Jeffrey Mitchell, University of Maryland, developed a protocol for gathering information and responding to the immediate emotional needs of employees who have been traumatized. It is called the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) process. In HHS, this process will be coordinated by the Crisis Management Team.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- occurs within the first 24 to 72 hours after a violent event;
- is conducted by a mental health professional with CISD training; and
- involves a number of phases (lengths of time vary for each person). These phases are:
 - **introductory:** normalize event; support
 - **fact phase:** let people talk about what happened (heard, saw, smelled, etc.)
 - **thought phase:** move from cognitive experience to emotional
 - **reaction phase:** feeling/emotional state
 - **symptoms phase:** determining the signals of life changes such as physical complaints and behavioral changes
 - **teaching phase:** cognitive learning about symptoms; normalizing experiences and reactions
 - **re-entry phase:** plan of action; follow-up; referral to additional information sources and long-term counseling, if necessary.

PART 8: OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

Supervisors and managers play a critical role in responding to the immediate and long-term needs of employees. The following suggestions are provided for supervisory staff in handling employees after a violent event.

- Be sensitive to the “invisible” or emotional injuries described earlier.
- Observe the ripple effect of these events as the impact usually grows.
- Be sure the employee is not always isolated.
- Control media access to employees.
- Do not joke about the event.
- Do not trivialize the event, i.e. “It could have been worse”.
- Suggest help through the EAP or others who intervene in traumatic situations if symptoms and job performance changes do not normalize.

HELPING YOURSELF

There are a number of things employees can do to help themselves get through a traumatic event. In addition to availing themselves of assistance offered by the Department, these ideas may help with the management of physical and emotional effects.

- Eat balanced meals. Keep stimulants to a minimum and do not use alcohol and drugs to cope.
- Exercise regularly, especially within the first 24 hours of the incident.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Talk about the incident with social support systems.
- Maintain a manageable schedule.
- Avoid boredom.
- Seek outside help when needed.
- Plan for your future safety.

PART 8: OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

PREVENTION

One of the major components of a workplace violence strategy is prevention. The following is a list of measures intended to reduce or prevent these types of situations.

1. **POLICY** ⇒ It is important that all employees, including managers and supervisors, understand the policy and modify behaviors that are prohibited.
2. **WORK ENVIRONMENT** ⇒ Treat co-workers with respect and work to minimize negative feelings such as isolation, resentment and hostility among employees.
3. **EMPLOYMENT SCREENING** ⇒ Carefully and thoroughly screen pre-employment references to avoid hiring potentially dangerous individuals.
4. **SECURITY** ⇒ Use a variety of security measures to help ensure safety.
5. **WEAPONS** ⇒ Possession or use of firearms and other dangerous weapons on the property of all HHS facilities is illegal. (Certain exceptions apply 18 U.S.C. Section 930(c).) Any HHS employee who violates prohibitions on possession of a weapon in HHS facilities will be prosecuted and/or appropriately disciplined.
6. **EDUCATION** ⇒ Awareness and tactical training for all employees, including supervisors and managers, is a crucial step towards reducing or preventing workplace violence. In addition, training on conflict resolution and stress management offers techniques and skills to deal effectively with conflict and reduce stress.
7. **EARLY INTERVENTION** ⇒ Early intervention is vital and helps to prevent the situation from escalating to violence.

EXERCISE FOR PUTTING YOUR ENERGY TO WORK

PART 8: OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

The best way to handle violence in the workplace is to prevent it from occurring. Take a few minutes to think about how you can contribute to the prevention of workplace violence. List three things you can do now and describe any help you will need in carrying out these ideas:

1.

2.

3.

We Hope You Found This Training Useful !

RESOURCE GUIDE

BELOW ARE SOME ADDITIONAL RESOURCE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.

HHS Workplace Violence Intervention and Prevention Group (Ad Hoc; Policy Oversight)

Contact: ASMB, Office of Human Resources

Telephone: (202) 690-8229

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

4676 Columbia Parkway

Cincinnati, OH 45226-1998

(800)356-4674

NIOSH provides an array of training material, including videos, and search services. The toll-free number is open from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. EST. Upon request, information sheets can be faxed. A 3-packet guide, "Homicide in the Workplace" is also available.

National Institutes of Health

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

5600 Fishers Lane, Room 7C02

Rockville, MD 20857

(301) 496-4513

In addition to other literature, NIMH publishes two free publications on depression (which has been found to be a factor in workplace violence), "What To Do If An Employee Is Depressed" and "Managing Depression in the Workplace."

National Domestic Violence Hotline

(800) 799-SAFE or (800) 787-3224 (TDD)

U.S. Public Health Service

Office on Women's Health

200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 730B

Washington, DC 20201

(202) 690-7650

Provides information, brochures, fact sheets, etc. on all matters related to women's health including violence against women.

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS OF LOCAL RESOURCES
(COMPLETE THIS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL)**

Keep this posted at your workstation

Your Supervisor:

Building Security:

Building Health Unit:

Human Resource Staff:

Employee Assistance Program:

Crisis Management Team:

Local Law Enforcement:

Fire Department:

National Domestic Hotline: 800-799-SAFE or
800-787-3224 (TDD)

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VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE
Participant Feedback

Agency:_____

Position:_____

Date:_____

Thank you for participating in this training workshop. Please take a moment to complete the following evaluation form. Your feedback and comments will be helpful for future training of Federal employees.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT.

	Agree			Disagree	
1. The workshop adequately addressed its stated goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I found this workshop beneficial and useful.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The manual and the overheads were easy to follow.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The time allotted for this training was appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The trainer was effective.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Overall score for this training.	1	2	3	4	5

The thing I liked best about this training is:_____

The thing I liked least about this training is:_____

Additional comments:_____

thanks !